

WORLD STUDIES

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0-7	8-15	16-22	23-28	29-36

Registration breakdown by theme

Theme	Percentage of submissions for this WS theme
Culture, language and identity	21.74%
Conflict, peace and security	9.97%
Equality and inequality	12.56%
Economic stability	19.94%
Health and development	19.78%
Science, technology and society	16.01%

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

A problem this year is that the division of the World Studies Extended Essay into six themes has sent a signal to candidates and supervisors that these are the interdisciplinary academic subjects on which the essays are to be based, rather than actual IB Diploma subjects. This was introduced to make registration and examiner selection easier, but candidates are mistaking the themes for the underlying academic subjects or areas in which interdisciplinary research is to be sought. The World Studies Extended Essays are to be written taking the conceptual framework and knowledge claims of two or more IB subjects.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

As in previous years there was evidence of work done for, or in the mode of other curriculum tasks being presented as Extended Essays. These were usually works submitted as reports, often lacking proper citation and based entirely on current news media rather than academic sources. Some schools and supervisors seemed to lack familiarity with the IB's expectations of an academic research essay as contained in the EE guide.

Suitability often depended on the difficult initial task of finding an issue of global importance with a suitable local manifestation, seen from the perspectives of two or more IB academic subjects. Many essays fell short of this, and generally fell into one or more of the following categories:

- omission of any mention of IB academic subjects
- consideration of a an issue of global importance but omission of a local manifestation
- consideration of a local issue with omission of any consideration of its global significance

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

Too many essays focused on a local problem and made little attempt to set it in global context or see the perspectives of different disciplines. In some cases no mention was made of underlying disciplines anywhere in the essay.

The research question was sometimes absent from the introduction.

Criterion B: introduction

Some candidates wrote a preamble to the essay rather than an introduction. The criterion specifically focuses on three tasks, setting the research question in context, explaining its significance and why it is worthy of investigation. Additionally the IB subjects used should be indicated and justified. Many candidates and supervisors ignored the specified tasks. The tasks and an explanation of the global/local linkage (=context) should take several pages, and not just a single paragraph.

Criterion C: investigation

Some report-style essays were little more than a collation of online published news media, and scored poorly on this criterion. An appropriate range of sources should include the course companion/texts from the IB subjects and more detailed academic sources. The better essays were able to evaluate the validity of resources and if data was generated its integrity and limitations was considered.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

On this criterion most essays scored reasonably well. Placing an issue of global significance in an academic context in two subjects is quite demanding so examiners tended to judge quality of explanation and grasp of knowledge bases somewhat generously.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Some weaker essays relied heavily on narrative or made generalised claims without evidence in support. Supervisors should really have picked this up at draft stage and encouraged candidates to be more analytical. The better essays were a delight to assess: the reader was held in a state of attentiveness by the coherence of argument and its support in hard-won evidence. Some forgot to tie the argument back to the research question in the closing stages.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

Only the very best candidates could evaluate sources and be aware of the limitations of others' and their own arguments. Achievement of level 4 was rarely seen on this criterion. The weaker essays were devoid of analytical and evaluative content and often scored achievement level 1 or 0. Examiners will always credit a candidate who attempts evaluation even if its success is limited, as these skills are central to the research essay and the Diploma itself.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

Examiners expect to see use being made of the discrete vocabulary of two disciplines. Understanding of key terms is often evident from the way they are woven into explanations. Sometimes the ideas and concepts of one subject dominated. Occupying the territory of a subject does not mean it is being used: if a topic is in the past that does not mean that history has been used, nor economics if monetary values appear. Candidates should find out how historians and economists use their concepts to make proper use of those subjects.

Criterion H: conclusion

Conclusions should not be summaries but should refer back to the research question and resolve it. Neither should new material be introduced.

Criterion I: formal presentation

A few essays contained omissions that could have been corrected with a prompt from the supervisor and relatively little work, for example no page numbers, no separate chapters, no abstract, no contents page. Some report-style essays provided a contents page but the essay itself was not subdivided into chapters, sometimes with paragraphs lasting several pages. In these cases the examiner had to decide where the introduction ended or conclusion began.

Criterion J: Abstract

Marks are lost needlessly on the abstract. A few candidates offered only a preamble lacking the three required elements. Of these the second, scope or methodology (how and why the

research question was investigated) was the most likely to be missing. Instead candidates frequently offered a summary of the essay to follow.

Criterion K: Holistic Judgement

For World Studies examiners look for emerging global consciousness as well as intellectual initiative, depth of understanding and insight. This can be seen most easily in a researcher's reflection space, presented in a minority of essays

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

More and more IB syllabus guides now include lists of key concepts and their definitions. Supervisors should make these available to candidates to help with criteria D, F and G. This is particularly true if the candidate is not studying one of the subjects. There is huge variation in supervision, from excellent to derelict. Schools should make space for experienced supervisors to train those new to it. The IB offers good online courses in Extended Essay supervision and those who experience these courses should share their experiences. Examiners are distressed when they cannot award the easily won rubric-related marks due to the shortcomings of supervision. World Studies should not be used as an option for essays which do not apparently fit other subjects, or as an overflow for supervisors reluctant to take further essays. World Studies should be a positive option for candidates genuinely interested in interdisciplinary work or who wish to explore an issue of global importance. Candidates should be encouraged to use disparate rather than closely related subjects. The majority of essays seem to rely on Group 3 subjects, and the social sciences rely on relatively similar methodologies. Essays which are built on subjects from different groups perhaps have greater potential for interdisciplinary. Candidates and supervisors are reminded that subjects outside the IB offer, such as Law and Education are not permissible. The subjects must be Diploma subjects.